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# How To Read



BY

EDWARD GARSTIN SMITH



# HOW TO READ

BY  
EDWARD GARSTIN SMITH  
PUBLISHER

ALSO VENDOR OF SELECTED BOOKS

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Reading Should Be for the Purpose  
of  
Improving the Understanding

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Price 35 Cents

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**My literature will not enable you to  
make more money,  
But it will help you to  
become a better citizen**

By Transfer

JUN 1 1921

## PREFACE

It is the purpose of this little book to give to the reader, in a short space and brief manner, important suggestions as to how to read. To comprehend these suggestions inevitably involves some understanding of the human mind.

I intend to present the public, in the near future, a book on "The Mind." It will state the whole subject in its general scope and essential features.

However, to know how to read requires an understanding of some of the functions and faculties of the mind. To that extent I shall go into the subject in this book.

On Christmas day in the year 496 Bishop Remé of Rheims, in baptizing King Clovis said: "Sicambrian, adore what thou hast burned and burn what thou hast adored."

Likewise the modern American, in order to learn "how to read," must unlearn much that he has been taught or to which he has become habituated. First of all he must learn:

1. To give proper attention.
2. To develop his reflective faculties.

My suggestion to American Christians is to adapt to themselves Remé's advice to Clovis.

The best evidence of understanding is the ability to impart it to others.

Often the dunce has a reputation for wisdom. He is called profound—because you can not understand him.

Only too often, in our educational institutions, the teachers are mere dunces making more dunces. For ages, in christendom, the Sunday sermon put people to sleep, even before the Sunday dinner. Preachers got a good living. Dunces paid the tax. Thus, the preacher grew proud of his stupidity; and the people, in anger, defended their own ignorance.—and the mind stagnated. On a certain occasion in an old Scotch kirk the preacher beheld his whole congregation asleep. In loud and angry tones he called on the sexton to throw red pepper into the eyes of the congregation. One shrewd old Scot arose and said: “Your Reverence better put the red pepper into your sermon.”

Today, the preachers to “get by” have inaugurated a new fashion—they play vaudeville. We have gone from Cotton Mather to “Billy Sunday. Which is worse? On the other hand, the writer or speaker who explains his understanding clearly is yet called—superficial.

Our schools are not strict, but too restricted. Metaphorically speaking, I would blow off the roof, tear down the walls and remove the false foundation. Then harmonize with nature. Our schools give "marks"—time registers. But they fail in the essence of education, which is to develop the faculties—train the mind. "The test of the pudding is in the eating." The test of a country's educational system is in the product of its schools. We are quick, inaccurate and inefficient. Accuracy is the first step toward honesty. "Get there, Eli," is our sole idea.

It is true we have great wealth and wonderful conveniences of life. But, is this due to our own present efficiency? I think not. It is due to the thought, enthusiasm, and perseverance of men of former generations. Their systems and fruits we are now enjoying.

Let us examine ourselves.

How about Grammar?

We butcher the English language while we suppress the German and ignore the Latin and the French, the sources of our own language. We sneer at those who have education and not much money. We are proud of our ignorance.

We have brains, but not intellect.

We have the raw product, but not the cultivated mind. Our possessions are merely monetary.

What do we know about Geography?

Do we know enough to even interrogate ourselves on that subject?

You say with pride, "I am a christian."

What do you know about the bible?

You say you believe the bible.

The fact is you know little in it. Furthermore, you do not have to know to believe.

Why, then, do you say you are a christian?

Because you have not the courage to go against "the powers that be." You are indifferent about your mental process. What do you care about facts, accuracy and truth.

All you want is to get something—material.

You are interested in the belly, not the spirit. Hence, your cowardice and moral indifference gradually permeates all your conduct.

Is this the spirit of free men?

What do you know about:

The Immortal Declaration of Independence?

That wise instrument, "The Constitution?"

That inspiration, The History of America?

You know the names, but not the subject matter. Yet you are very quick to jerk your hat off to "The Stars and Stripes." Why?



**Do not read to kill time  
But  
To improve with time.**

### AUTOMOBILE LESS.

Auto-mobilize your intellectual powers.

I can show you how to improve your mind.

But you must do the work.

I can direct you.

But you must travel the road.

The slow traveler "takes in the scenery."

The speeder merely "rushes by."

The first has had time for strong impressions.

The second has received but slight impressions.

The use of a well trained mind is easy; but its training was not easy.

### PLEASURES

The intellectual delights are even greater than the mere physical pleasures.

I have enjoyed both. Have you?

### PROPER EDUCATION EMBRACES

1. Proper development.
2. Proper knowledge.
3. Proper use.

**Genius without work is a joke.**

## HOW TO LEARN

Follow nature's natural course.

Observe the infant's instinctive ways of learning. They are better than ours.

The baby says *ma* before it can learn to say *mama*, *pa* before *papa*, the monosyllable before the polysyllable. I knew a child that before it could learn to say *Grandmother said*, for a long time, "*Gar.*"

From the dawn of intelligence the mind reaches out to take in. All the senses are in action. It sees persons and objects, it tastes milk, it hears sounds, smells, and feels warmth. Then, within, it strives to understand; and the improved mind reaches out for more.

Curiosity leads to investigation.

That which is within seeks its kindred without. What we have already absorbed is a magnet drawing to us more of the same.

The alphabet leads to the formation of words, words to the construction of sentences, sentences to grammar and grammar finally to perfect speech.

So, in learning, let us be natural: that means, specifically, to be gradual, patient and persevering—accurate first and quick afterwards.

A proper beginning is of the utmost importance. The simple comes before the complex. Finally, when your maturity enables you to comprehend the complex, always bear in mind the simple, because the solution of the complex is simple. If you understand you should be able to explain; otherwise you are deficient.

In learning let us go step by step—it cannot be done by leaps and bounds. The human understanding cannot grasp all at once.

Just as the sapling in time expands into the tree, so the human mind needs time for growth, nurture and development.

Let us take in knowledge by absorption; nourish and cherish it. It will then fructify. Acquire knowledge with pleasure and for good uses; and not as an ornament for ostentation. Rather encourage children to learn than force them by mere teaching. Induce them to become their own strict task masters.

Catechisms hermetically seal the mind.

Reflection affiliates with the universe.

In nature you will find a magician. Ignore her and you will plunge into a wilderness.

There is no wilderness like man's jungle.

If you follow nature, study, work and duty will become pleasures.

## HOW TO READ

1. What to Read.

2. Why to Read.

3. How to Read.

1.

Read that which will do you good.

The substance of reading, like eating, should be wholesome.

Above all, read history.

It will increase your knowledge, enlarge your views and improve your understanding.

2.

Reading should be to improve your understanding.

Good reading will tend to make you!

1. A better man.

2. A better citizen.

3.

Read understandingly. Use your faculties of memory and reflection. Reading should be selected, masticated, digested, retained and ejected.

## READ OPEN MINDEDLY

Do not read merely to confirm your beliefs and opinions. Read to ascertain facts from which to educe truth.

## HOW TO MEMORIZE

Pay attention, first, last and all the time.

Concentration is the intense, proper application of attention—chiselling into the mind.

For the reception of thought:

Proper attention is necessary.

The retention of thought depends on:

1. The quality of attention at reception.
2. The continued sound condition of mind.
3. The review of intellectual possessions.

What you have learned and forgotten is no longer a part of your intellectual wealth.

To fix in mind, it is necessary to consider:

1. Nomenclature.
2. Geography.
3. Chronology.

This must be done

1. Arbitrarily.
  2. By association.
1. Similarity. 2. Contrast. 3. Contiguity.

The use of memorized thought comes naturally with the active, developed mind.

## AN ILLUSTRATION

The battle of Hastings was fought in October 1066. To a Beginner, this is an arbitrary act of memorizing.

But, to one advanced in knowledge, this event forms a basis for association.

Thus:

Bear in mind:

1. A battle.
2. The month of October.
3. The year of the century, (66).

## 1. SIMILARITY.

This method enables you to remember:  
 The surrender of Burgoyne in October, 1777.  
 The surrender of Cornwallis in October, 1781.  
 The discovery of America in October, 1492.

## 1066

The birth of King John of England in	1166.
The birth of King Richard II “ “	1366.
The birth of King Henry IV “ “	1366.
The surrender of Prussia to Poland in	1466.
The birth of King James I of England in	1566.
The Great London Fire in	1666.
The Repeal of the Stamp Act in	1766.
The Battle of Sadowa in	1866.



## 2. CONTRAST.

1483 birth of Martin Luther. 1546 death. Age 63  
1483 birth of Thomas Parr. 1635 death. Age 152

Martin Luther destroyed the Bastile of theocratic oppression, after one thousand years of intolerant domination. He gave man the right to think. He broke the fetters of conscience. Martin Luther was a famous man.

So was Thomas Parr. Why?

Because he lived 152 years. For this a monument in his honor was erected in Westminster.

## OLD PARR

Yet, in fame, Luther stands *above par*.

Here we can see similarity and contrast.

Similarity in year of birth and contrast in attainments.

Thomas Parr's life lasted 100 years longer than that of William Shakespeare.

Shakespeare is the sun of English literature, around which revolve all the brilliant intellectual stars of Britain, drawn by this powerful magnet. However, in America, Charley Chaplin has superseded Shakespeare.

Old Parr's 152 years remind me of all that he did not do.

Analogy prompts suggestion and suggestion leads to analysis. They are interrelated. For instance, the 52 in the 152 years of "Old Parr's" life suggests to me the year of the death of another old man. In 1852 died David Kennison, at the age of 115 years.

Kennison, it is said, was one of the members of the celebrated "Boston Tea Party" in 1773. He fought the "red coats" in the Revolution. At an age when other men retire with venerable dignity to respectable graves, Kennison, heeding the call of youth to "go west, young man," emigrated to Chicago, and died in the same year as Daniel Webster and Henry Clay. Kennison lies buried in Lincoln Park, Chicago.

Analogy prompts a further suggestion. In the year that Kennison was born there was also born another man who lived to a ripe old age, Charles Carroll of Carrollton, who died in 1832 at the age of 95 years.

In the same year died General Thomas Sumter at the age of 98 years—100 years after the birth of George Washington.

Again, the name of George Washington, at this juncture, reminds me that I saw the portrait painting of Thomas Sumter on the wall at Mount Vernon, Virginia.

## 3. CONTIGUITY.

*“Actual contact, continuity.”*

1476-1564—90 Michael Angelo

1564-1642—78 Galileo

1642-1727—85 Isaac Newton

1727-1820—93 Wm. Ellery

1630-1685—55 Charles I, England

1685-1745—55 Charles VI, Germany

1800-1859—59 Thomas B. Macauley

1800-1859—59 John Brown

1644-1718—74 Wm. Penn

1744-1818—74 Abigail Adams

1694-1778—84 Marie Aruet Voltaire

1794-1878—84 Wm. Cullen Bryant

1767-1848—81 John Quincy Adams

1767-1845—78 Andrew Jackson

1822-1885—63 Ulysses S. Grant

1822-1893—71 Rutherford B. Hayes

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

The philosophy of history consists in tracing the cause and effect of human action, considering time, place, manner and circumstances. One might say that to understand it requires a knowledge of human chemistry. Various human qualities, mental traits and physical ingredients, with climatic and material elements, combine to produce the ever changing, yet similar, narratives called history. Oak trees seasonably sprout, grow and shed leaves. They come and go; so do men. They are not the same leaves nor the same men—but similar. There are no two leaves alike in all the forests of the world. Yet there are distinct species, with minor varieties in the species. There are no two men alike in all the world, yet men classify distinctly in attributes.

We are similar and dissimilar.

The chemist knows the effect of the combination or use of certain chemicals. He understands the effect of heat, light and motion.

Likewise, the well informed, thinking man, called the historian and philosopher, understands the chemical effect of the combination and activity of certain human qualities.

Concisely speaking, the philosophy of history consists in understanding the essential lessons to be educed from yesterday.

Every man's yesterday is his history.

Wisdom is the dividend of experience.

The man who fails to learn the lessons from the experience of yesterday, or who forgets it, invites disaster. Likewise with a nation. Experience is the lamp of the future. In its light you can look ahead. Extinguish it, then you will be in the dark.

You cannot *acquire* the philosophy of history unless you *acquire* the data of history. You may get it second hand, on faith. This is dangerous, because you make yourself subject to imposition.

You cannot get the data without work.

To educe the philosophy also requires work.

This work is brain work.

It requires a good memory, reason, and analytical powers, with a desire for truth.

#### AN EXAMPLE

"Blackhawk" said the day would come when the white man's courts of justice and prisons would be powerless to protect society from the criminality "the white man's civilization" developed.

The American business man whose mind manifests any evidence of the retention of some infantile tendencies is fortunate; because such use as most of them have made of their brains has damaged their minds.

They should go to the repair shop.

They need intellectual rearrangement, as well as moral readjustment.

They remind me of bacon. They need to "fry out" fat conceit.

They are proud of their ignorance.

Until the American money-maker realizes his own utter intellectual insignificance, his case is hopeless, as far as reformation is concerned. There are conditions "brewing" that may soon cause him "a rude awakening."

The business man should cultivate

#### RIGHT READING.

It will make him a better business man.

The American business man imagines that he is a good business man. But he is not.

In the first place, during the day, his employes run his business. Then, when he goes home his wife continues the same imposition.

I can see his finish. He will be regulated.



## SOME RANDOM SUGGESTIONS

You should select your books as you should select your friends, with care and for merit.

Books, like men, vary in quality.

Two books may be, like two friends, widely different, yet very desirable.

You should appreciate your friends and use your books properly.

Do not read a good book once and drop it. Pick it up again and keep up your acquaintance. Each perusal produces a better understanding.

Some books should be to you mere acquaintances, others intimate friends, and certain ones absolute necessities.

You should have an unabridged dictionary.

An encyclopedia is also a necessity.

If you went to school and later in life lost your text books, that is a misfortune.

You surely have forgotten their contents.

That you need to go over your old text books again is quite apparent.

I want to suggest to the American business man to buy and study "text books"—simple ones, such as are necessary for infantile intellects—spellers, readers, grammars, arithmetics, geographies and histories.

I read Blackstone's Commentaries four times.  
I shall read it again.

The first time I understood very little. But I realized the necessity to read English history. This I did. Then I read Blackstone again.

Next, I began to study English history.

Then I began to study Blackstone.

Presently I began to understand Blackstone and English history.

"Blackstone is one of the greatest books ever produced by man. It is a chart of our English law, showing the sources, trend and destiny. Blackstone died in 1780. Our American Constitution was produced in 1787. At that time "Blackstone's Commentaries" had been in print 22 years. At that time the United States population was about 3,000,000. Today it is about 100,000,000. I am inclined to think that at that time, there were in the United States ten times more Blackstone students than now.

Thirty years ago every good lawyer read Blackstone once a year. Now, it is obsolete.

But our law's administration shows it.

We have substituted the dicebox for reason.

I asked a young lawyer if he had read "Blackstone". He said, "Why, no. But I often go to The Blackstone for dinner."



## BOOKS, INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

Inside and outside, books are like men. Some make a good appearance—and nothing more. Others, you must get into to appreciate.

Shakespeare said:

“The apparel oft proclaims the man.”

That is a good advertising sentiment for the haberdasher and tailor. But, the apparel is often merely a masquerade—camouflage. The apparel simply covers the substance, good or bad. Yet, the best should not seek the worst apparel and discredit itself.

The inferior man who is well dressed is wise. The wise man who is slovenly is foolish. Likewise, a good book should be uniformly good inside and outside, from cover to cover. It should be printed on good paper, sufficiently large, clear type; nicely trimmed, strongly bound, with a clean, good appearing cover. The thoughts and spirit of a book are transmitted to your mind through physical functions. Hence, the “make up” should be considered. Never read in a bad light or moving conveyance that jars the body.

Never read small type. Never abuse your eyes. Use your eyes—never strain them.

“If anybody would make me the greatest king that ever lived, with palaces and gardens and fine dinners and wine, and coaches and beautiful clothes, and hundreds of servants, on condition that I would not read books, I would not be a king. I would rather be a poor man in a garret with plenty of books than a king who did not love reading.”

—*Thomas Babington Macauley.*

“Many of my friends are very poor mathematicians, but very good book-keepers.”

—*Walter Scott.*

## TO THE READER

If you like this book, if it has enlightened you, do not borrow it, do not lend it—be honest and do not steal it.

The publisher needs the money and the public is in need of an extensive reading of this book. Turn to the title page for the publisher's address and the price; and send for it. Also, take notice that it is copyrighted. When you repeat the valuable thoughts clothed in the language of another, give the author credit, by quotation. Do not emulate Billy Sunday, who stole an entire lecture from Robert G. Ingersoll and uttered it as his own. You too, may “get by.” But it is corrupting. Honesty is an inconvenience, if you are out of the habit.

The Constitution gives Congress the power: “To promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing, for limited times, to authors and inventors the exclusive rights to their respective writings and discoveries.”

“Colleges are places where they polish brick-bats and dim diamonds.”

—*Robert G. Ingersoll.*

Why is civilization “a will o’ the whisp”?

Why is civilization a mirage toward which mankind means to travel, but never reaches?

It sees it but gets it not.

Because mankind is maleducated and does not know the way.

We “seek the answer in the sky” and wallow in the mire. We have the seed of civilization in our soul; but it will not sprout in a desert.

Our schools are turning out annual streams of graduates who do not know how to learn, read, think or conduct themselves properly.

Cowper said:

“Though Nature weigh our talents and dispense  
To every man his modicum of sense,  
And conversation in its better part  
May be esteemed a gift and not an art,  
Yet much depends, as in the tiller’s toil,  
On culture, and the sowing of the soil.”

We have plenty of money, business-men, soldiers, churches, jails and asylums, but we need living Pestalozzis—“School Masters.”

## THE VILLAGE SCHOOL MASTER

“There in his noisy mansion, skill’d to rule,  
The village master taught his little school.  
A man severe he was, and stern to view;  
I knew him well, and every truant knew;  
Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace  
The day’s disaster in his morning face;  
Full well they laughed with counterfeited glee,  
At all his jokes, for many a joke had he;  
Full well the busy whisper, circling ’round,  
Convey’d the dismal tidings when he frowned.  
Yet he was kind, or, if severe in aught,  
The love he bore to learning was in fault.  
The village all declared how much he knew,  
’Twas certain he could write and cipher, too;  
Lands he could measure, terms and tides pre-  
sage,  
And e’en the story ran—that he could gauge;  
In arguing, too, the parson own’d his skill,  
For e’en though vanquish’d, he could argue still;  
While words of learned length and thund’ring  
sound,  
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around;  
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew  
That one small head could carry all he knew.  
But past is all his fame.”

—*Oliver Goldsmith*, in *The Deserted Village*.

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CONSOLIDATED MERCANTILE  
COMPANY.

Pigtown, Iowa.

Mr. John Henry,  
Dealer in Second-hand Books,  
Porkopolis, Ill.

Dear Sir:

My father died lately. He willed to me his library. They say they are good old fashioned books. There ain't an up-to-date book in the lot. They was written by Old Rubes like Shakeyspier, Scot, McAuley, Goldschmidt, Burns, Tackerie, Irwin, Amerson, Wolstair, Longfeller, Mickey Aurilyuse, Hommer, Socrats, Harristutle, Sissero, &c.

I hain't got no time to make a list. It is too durned long.

Dad was a little soft in the head about books. He read 'em lots, but they'se all neat and clean — "apple pie order," "Grandma" would say. There's over 3,000. I know he said they cost him over \$5,000.00. Give me \$200.00 and you can have the outfit, and retail them to suckers at a big profit.

I want to buy gasoline. I'm a practical man and this book stuff don't get yer nothin'.

Yours Truly,

JOHN SPOT CASH.



A. — — — ACCURACY  
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To read with profit you must  
read with care.

Edward Martin Smith  
